

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

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PART I **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

HOLLOW HILL LANE – EXPERIMENTAL SCHEME

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel a summary of the rationale behind the decision to close Hollow Hill Lane under an experimental scheme.

2 Recommendations/ Proposed Action

The Panel is requested to note the known factors and planned major schemes that led to the decision to close Hollow Hill Lane at Chequers Bridge under the experimental traffic order.

The Panel is requested to note that this report has been produced at the initial stages of the experimental scheme and during an ongoing consultation. Therefore the report does not have information on the data and feedback collected thus far, nor an analysis of the result of the consultation to date.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy (SJWS) Priorities

Priorities:

- Health: Providing transport facilities that ensure residents can access the health services they need.
- Economy and Skills – Continue to provide residents with access to essential services by improving connections and journey times between work, home, leisure, school and making alternatives to the car more attractive.
- Regeneration and Environment; Improving facilities and access to bus services to increase the use of sustainable forms of transport.
- Housing: Improved public transport links to the area, with quicker journey times for the bus routes serving the area and giving greater choices for residents as to where they can live and access work and facilities.
- Safer Communities: Reduced traffic congestion at the location to improve the environment for residents at the location. This should make a place where people feel safe to live and visit.

Cross-Cutting themes:

Civic responsibility: By ensuring that residents are able to express their views and participate in the identification of mitigating measures that will benefit the transport in Slough for everyone.

Improving the image of the town: By enhancing the sustainable transport links to Heathrow Airport, London and beyond, improving access and reducing journey times of local bus services and general commuter traffic.

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

The scheme will deliver the following key actions of the Five Year Outcomes that are also represented in the Transport and Highways Service Plan 2016/17.

- 1.2 *Ensure a fit for business transport infrastructure* by ensuring that the impacts of a road closure are understood and considered for future schemes.
- 1.5 *Agree a coordinated plan to maximise the benefits of Cross Rail and Western Rail Link to Heathrow* by ensuring informed remedial and mitigation proposals are put forward.
- 3.1 *Define and establish the Centre of the Town as a destination* by providing a sound and reliable multi modal transport system and managing the road network.
- 4.1 *Build on success in making Slough safer* by incorporating road safety schemes into all engineering schemes delivered across the council.
- 5.4 *Ensure children and young people are emotionally and physically healthy* by improving air quality through delivering schemes that reduce congestion at key locations.

4 Other Implications

a) Financial

The council have undertaken the experiment in order to determine the impact on the road network if a permanent closure comes into effect. From the planned major schemes for the area, it has been indicated that a permanent closure could be a real possibility. Closing the road under an experimental order enables the council to determine the effects of the closure, thus opening negotiations for mitigating measures with the major scheme sponsors.

There are currently no quantifiable financial implications from the recommendations or proposed actions of the report

b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
None	None	There are no risks, threats or opportunities arising from the report.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no legal or Human Rights Act implications relating to the content of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of EIA relating to this report.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Background:

Following submission of the HS2 Hybrid Bill application to parliament in November 2013 and subsequent additional provisions, Slough Borough Council had initially petitioned against AP2 and AP4 in relation to the relocation of the Heathrow Express depot to Langley. HS2 Ltd have since participated in ongoing discussions with Local Authorities and stakeholders, however are progressing with plans that impact on many including Slough residents and businesses situated in the Langley area.

5.2 Due to the planned relocation of the Heathrow Express depot to Langley and from the currently available information it is apparent that there are plans for major civil works including construction, diversion and upgrading of rail infrastructure. The proposed project would therefore require significant work to and around the railway bridge on Hollow Hill Lane. Inevitably this will require the closure of Hollow Hill Lane where a single two-way traffic lane currently passes under the rail bridge.

5.3 The Bill is currently under consideration at the House of Lords following which Royal Assent, though unconfirmed, is likely to be granted by the end of 2016. HS2's current construction plans for the depot is for a minimum period of 2 years and a temporary road closure is part of the construction plan.

5.4 HS2 is just one of a number of planned national strategic projects in the area expected to happen between 2017 and 2014. Others include:

- The Smart motorway project on the M4 (2017-2022), which may require a site compound near Sutton Lane between 2018-2020.
- Improvements to the access of Langley Railway Station – being made in preparation of the start of Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) services in 2019 (with the project starting in 2017).

- The expected arrival of the Heathrow Express (HEX) depot, as part of the planned HS2 project (2017-2019), with 75 estimated HGV movements per day in addition to the planned temporary closure for the significant work on Hollow Hill Lane at Chequers Bridge.
- A major gravel extraction project by CEMEX at Riding Court Farm (from late 2016) and in Richings Park (from 2018) with an estimated 240 HGV movements per day (the planning application is due to be submitted to Buckinghamshire County Council in August 2016).
- WRLtH - the project to build a western rail link between Reading and Heathrow terminal 5 (2019-2024), which could potentially lead to the permanent closure of the road.
- If approved, a third runway at Heathrow.

5.5 On behalf of its residents, it is in the interest of the Council to explore and ascertain what the impact of a closure on the road network would be and therefore an experimental order was proposed. The experimental order gives the Council the opportunity to better understand the impacts of the closure in real terms and put in place mitigating measures where possible. Importantly, the knowledge attained provides the evidence to influence the major scheme sponsors to provide specific and relevant improvements on the road network and any that may fall outside of already agreed assurances.

5.6 Transport Modelling

Transport modelling was undertaken by Network Rail to assess the impact of the closure and the modelling indicated the following roads would be affected:

- Langley Park Road / Station Road / High Street through Langley
- Thorney Lane / North Park through Iver and Richings Park
- St Mary's Road / Langley Road between George Green and Langley

However, the modelling is unable to account for the real-life scenario and therefore the significant decision was taken to undertake an experimental closure.

5.7 Further traffic counts will be analysed when available and the Council will also commission its own surveys during the neutral periods of the year.

5.8 Consultation process

The procedure for consultation as part of an experimental traffic order is such that consultation begins once the scheme is operational. In this case the consultation for the experimental closure began on the 2nd August 2016.

5.9 Discussions with stakeholders including neighbouring authorities were conducted before the closure followed by briefing meetings with affected members 1 week prior to the closure.

The scheme was then publicised via various council channels, including:

- Press release and media enquiries

- Social media updates, including on the new Transport for Slough Facebook page

5.10 The following methods have been set up as channels for communications and feedback for the scheme:

- Online SurveyMonkey questionnaire
- Writing to the council
- Emailing TfS@slough.gov.uk
- Discussing on the TfS facebook page www.facebook.com/TransportforSlough

In addition, public drop-in sessions and periodic stakeholder meetings have been organised for September, October and November.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

No other committees have commented on these issues to date.

7 **Conclusion**

7.1 The consultation process has begun and results will need to be analysed and presented in due course. The rationale for the closure remains and the aim is to provide the best possible outcomes for Slough's residents.

7.2 Members are requested to note the strategic rationale for the experimental closure and the reasons for conducting an experiment and the aim to inform potential mitigations, to assess the impacts of closing the road as part of planned major schemes and to formulate an evidence base that can open negotiations if relevant.

8 **Appendices Attached**

Appendix 1 - scheme leaflet

9 **Background Papers**

Information on the closure and improvements to Langley will be kept up to date on the council's website and can be found at <http://www.slough.gov.uk/parking-travel-and-roads/langley-transport-infrastructure-improvements.aspx> .